

**THE DIES IRAE**

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The Dies Irae by Franklin Johnson

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**FRANKLIN JOHNSON**

**THE DIES IRAE**



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The Dies Ira.

By Franklin Johnson



AN ENGLISH VERSION IN DOUBLE  
RHYMES, WITH AN ESSAY  
AND NOTES.

By FRANKLIN JOHNSON.

1883.

## PREFACE.

IN 1865 I published in a religious journal a translation of the *Dies Iræ* in double rhymes. When the glamour of composition had passed away, the defects of my performance were so apparent that I determined to correct them. I did not suppose that the task would prove arduous; but though so long a time has elapsed, my ideal is still far above my attainment. The work occupied my attention at frequent intervals for fifteen years, and I think that in few months of this period did I fail to make some progress. There were weeks in succession during which, both day and night, my mind was filled with the stanzas. At such seasons, the moment that I gained a little leisure, they

would appear before me like an army marching with thundrous cadence. I could not have dismissed them had I desired; but I did not wish to do so. The verses, like the names of flowers, have a charm even for those who do not know their meaning. But one familiar with the sense finds in them an unexampled appeal to the heart, to the imagination, to terror, to hope; and if he engages in the tantalizing effort to set forth in English their burden of thought, their sublime pictures, frequently dashed in with a single word, their throbs of emotion, their weird measure, and their delicate assonances, he falls under a fascination at once awful and delightful. The occupation has often assisted me to conquer care, and has brought me refreshment.

No man has a better right than that of its author to criticise a production; and I am well aware how much my translation is lack-

ing in the life and movement of the original :

The marble shows the form and face ;  
But who shall give it vital grace ?

To the inherent difficulties of the task, recognized by all who have attempted it, is added now the necessity of avoiding ground already occupied by others ; and this requires great solicitude, so numerous are the versions, and so various are the forms of ingenuity exhibited in their structure.

CAMBRIDGE, MASS.,  
*November 10, 1883.*



the  $\mathbb{R}^n$  is a linear space over  $\mathbb{R}$  with the usual addition and scalar multiplication. The inner product is defined by

$$(x, y) = x_1 y_1 + x_2 y_2 + \dots + x_n y_n \quad (1)$$

where  $x = (x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n)$  and  $y = (y_1, y_2, \dots, y_n)$ . The norm of  $x$  is defined by

$$\|x\| = \sqrt{(x, x)} = \sqrt{x_1^2 + x_2^2 + \dots + x_n^2} \quad (2)$$

The distance between  $x$  and  $y$  is defined by

$$\|x - y\| = \sqrt{(x - y, x - y)} = \sqrt{(x_1 - y_1)^2 + (x_2 - y_2)^2 + \dots + (x_n - y_n)^2} \quad (3)$$

The angle between  $x$  and  $y$  is defined by

$$\cos \theta = \frac{(x, y)}{\|x\| \|y\|} \quad (4)$$

The orthogonal projection of  $x$  onto  $y$  is defined by

$$x \cdot \frac{y}{\|y\|} = \frac{(x, y)}{\|y\|} \frac{y}{\|y\|} = \frac{(x, y)}{\|y\|^2} y \quad (5)$$

The orthogonal component of  $x$  relative to  $y$  is defined by

$$x - \frac{(x, y)}{\|y\|^2} y \quad (6)$$

The orthogonal distance from  $x$  to  $y$  is defined by

$$\|x - \frac{(x, y)}{\|y\|^2} y\| \quad (7)$$

The orthogonal distance from  $x$  to the line through  $y$  is defined by

$$\|x - \frac{(x, y)}{\|y\|^2} y\| \quad (8)$$

The orthogonal distance from  $x$  to the plane through  $y$  is defined by

$$\|x - \frac{(x, y)}{\|y\|^2} y\| \quad (9)$$

The orthogonal distance from  $x$  to the hyperplane through  $y$  is defined by

$$\|x - \frac{(x, y)}{\|y\|^2} y\| \quad (10)$$

## THE DIFFICULTIES

WHICH ATTEND THE TRANSLATION OF THE  
DIES IRÆ INTO ENGLISH.

Versions of the Dies Iræ in single rhymes may be made with great facility; and it is remarkable that those stanzas which are most difficult to render in double rhymes are the easiest to produce in the other form. Take the first, for example:

Day of wrath! Ah me, that day!  
Earth in flame shall pass away:  
Thus both Psalm and Sibyl say.

But the versions in single rhymes lack an essential element of the charm which the Latin possesses, and are chiefly interesting

because, though they fail to give the cadance and the feeling of the original, they may be made quite literal. I dismiss them, therefore, and in the rest of this essay I shall speak only of versions in double rhymes.

The chief requisite of a translation is that it conform to the rules of its own language, while it exhibits the spirit, as well as the sense of the original. This is expressed well by Jowett in his second edition of Plato : " It may seem a truism to assert that an English translation must have a distinct meaning, and must be English. Its object is not merely to render the words of one language into the words of another, but to produce an impression similar, or nearly similar, to that of the original on the mind of the reader. It should be rhythmical and varied, and, above all, equable in style. It should in some degree, at least, retain the characteristic qualities of the ancient writer, his freedom,